

TOP BOOKS FOR THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR'S SHELF

- **Called to Teach and Learn: A Catechetical Guide for the Episcopal Church** (New York: the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 1994) was the result of a collaborative effort stemming from a National Task Force report presented to the 69th General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 1986. Presented and adopted in 1994, this guide is intended to be a foundational, theoretical document with implied practice for the Church's educational ministry. Based on our understanding that we are called by God through our Baptism, The Episcopal Church recognizes that three intentional, interrelated, life long processes comprise how a person is fashioned into a Christian within the life of a community. This includes formation: the participation and practice of the Christian life of faith, education: a process of critical reflection on participation and practice in light of the Gospel and instruction/training: the processes in which knowledge and skills that are important to the Christian life of faith are acquired. This catechetical manual outlines who we are as Episcopalians: the past, present, and hopes for the future.
- Joseph Russell has given us a companion to our lectionary and prayer book with **The New Prayer Book Guide to Christian Education** (Boston: Cowley Publications, 1996). Following the church calendar by season, he overviews each week for Years A, B, and C, summarizing each lesson and providing themes and key vocabulary from a child's perspective. Formation in baptismal discipleship, social justice, Christian practice and liturgical action, hymns, seasonal themes and traditions are also noted. Designed for those in parish leadership, this is an especially helpful book for clergy and Christian educators working collaboratively.
- Centering Christian education on the Episcopal lectionary is the emphasis of **Sharing Our Biblical Story: A Guide to Using Liturgical Readings as the Core of Church and Family Education** by Joseph P. Russell (Wilton, CT: Morehouse Barlow, 1988). With chapters devoted to biblical storytelling, an overview of the Bible, and models for developing programs in a parish setting, the essence of this text is providing commentary to the lections for every Sunday of the Church year. Religious concepts are outlined, as well as what stories are best to share with children on each Sunday.
- **In Dialogue with Scripture: An Episcopal Guide to Studying the Bible** edited by Linda Grenz (New York: The Episcopal Church Center) is a reference tool for using the Bible with a variety of ages. Several types of Bible Study are outlined, including processes developed by Walter Wink, Verna Dozier, Patricia Ness and others, including the African Bible Study Method. Practices and suggestions for group dynamics are also given, as well as a listing of curricula for all ages with publisher information and audio-visual centers.
- Published from the Anglican Church in Canada, **God, Kids & Us: The Growing Edge of Ministry with Children and the People Who Care for Them** by Janet Marshall & Susan Walker (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1998) is a how-to resource for any parish organizing a Christian education program. Using The Baptismal Covenant and The Children's Charter for the Church, these two Christian educators have organized how to develop a program from start to finish, including supply lists, evaluation forms for children, parents and adults and how to incorporate children into the life of a parish community.
- **In Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church** (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989) Maria Harris gives new meaning to the word "curriculum" in her exploration of how the church instructs and informs Christians on the "course of the church's life". From the Book of Acts we learn the description and purpose of the various ministries within the early Church. These can continue to be models for us as the church educates through worship, proclamation, community and service. These terms are used throughout Harris' book, with an explanation (and questions for discussion at each chapter's conclusion) as to how we can continue to live out these elements in the 21st church. They are: kerygma (proclaiming the word of Jesus' resurrection), didache (the activity of teaching), leiturgia (coming together to pray and to represent Jesus in the breaking of bread), koinoia (community), and diakonia (caring for those in need). To Harris, the Church does not have

an education program; it is an education program.

- A book geared for parents, **Making a Home for Faith** by Elizabeth Caldwell (Cleveland: United Church Press, 2000) offers guidance and examples to parents who desire to nurture their child's faith in a home setting. Using the premise of Horace Bushnell's *Christian Nurture*, Caldwell believes parents and caregivers have the most important role in a child's faith development. Using examples of daily life experiences in the home, suggestions are made as to how to encourage discussion of faith with children through seasons of the year, prayer, mealtimes, play and reading. Using contemporary writers and theologians (such as John Westerhoff, Walter Bruggemann, Madeline L'Engle, and Rabbi Marc Gellman) practical ideas are given for connecting daily life with scripture and conversation about God. Each chapter concludes with questions designed to encourage parents to reflect on their own beliefs and faith experiences as a child, as well as activities that can be done in a family setting.
- Gretchen Wolff Pritchard's **Offering the Gospel to Children** (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1992) is a mother and Christian educator's vision to tell the biblical story to children without sugar-coating or editing it to protect them. Interspersing stories of her own spiritual journey along with being a parent of three girls, Pritchard shares her vision of including children in the life of the Church, through its worship, storytelling and rituals of the seasons. Using art, music and drama, she presents ways in which to engage children in the Sacred Story so that the Story will become part of who they are. She criticizes the pattern of segregating children from the parish community in "Sunday School basements" and offers her dream of formational parish education for all ages.
- John H. Westerhoff III critiques modern Christian education practices and shares his theory of faith development for parents, clergy and teachers in both his books, **Bringing Up Children in the Christian Faith** (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1980) and **Will Our Children Have Faith?** revised edition (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2000). Both books speak of faith as a journey that involves life-long learning in a community of believers. He provides guidelines for sharing our faith in the context of community celebration, prayer and witness. Describing four styles of faith (experienced, affiliative, searching and owned), Westerhoff speaks of how a community lives in a historical, social and cultural context which impacts the views, values and lifestyles that are transmitted to our children.
- **Living Water: Baptism as a Way of Life** (New York: Church Publishing, 2002) is a multi-level resource exploring the centrality of baptism to one's life long journey of faith. Focusing on water and her personal journey, Klara Tammany uses prayers, songs, storytelling and symbolic action to explore our Baptismal Covenant in eight sessions. Practical ideas are given for using these ideas with adult inquirers, Lenten studies, baptismal preparation, and Confirmation instruction. It would be a great companion for those preparing to Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows. An exhaustive resource list is included, as well as an outline for session planning.
- Caroline Fairless engages the reader in "out of the box" experiences for fully engaging the whole community in inclusive worship in **Children at Worship: Congregations in Bloom** (New York: Church Publishing, 2001). Sharing stories about her ministry with children and families at Holy Spirit in Half Moon Bay, California, Fairless gives creative and provocative ideas for telling the biblical story, engaging all ages through art and meditation. Filled with drawings by children and scripts to be used in liturgy, this book shows worship and education in formational language.
- **Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey: Nurturing a Life of Faith** by Catherine Stonehouse (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998) is a concise overview of a variety of developmental theories regarding children and their relationship for understanding how faith forms in children. Stonehouse follows several approaches in discerning what children need in order to experience a faith-full spiritual journey. Her thesis is that there is more to spiritual development than what can be learned from psychosocial, cognitive and moral development. A biblical perspective is needed, as well as the view of how faith is taught

through tradition, working with others, social science and a combination of all of the above, which she calls an "integrative approach." Stonehouse reviews child development through the lens of children living in community (in biblical times and today), and through the theories of Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, Ana-Maria Rizzuto, James Fowler and Jerome Berryman.

- Beginning with the New Testament and concluding with recent feminist theologies, **The Child in Christian Thought** edited by Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001) is an overview of the theology of childhood as found in Christian doctrine for the past two thousand years. A compilation of 17 essays, each overviews a particular time and place in the history of the Christian Church in regard to theological approaches and understanding of children in the Church, society and family. By using childhood as a "lens" to understand theological movements in the Church, the concepts of original sin and understanding of baptism, advocacy and responsibilities of a Christian community are explored. This volume gives an overview of Church history from a perspective of a wide variety of theologians while offering insights and challenges to inform our theologies and practices in the Church today.
- An historical perspective and a vision for the future of religious education are given by Maria Harris and Gabriel Moran in **Reshaping Religious Education: Conversations on Contemporary Practice** (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998). They review the developments of how a faith community (specifically the Catholic Church) has understood religious education in terms of forms: the ideas, practices and attitudes that have permeated the institution. Their thesis involves challenging the Christian church to reshape its understanding of these forms in order to remain current with culture while maintaining the integrity of the Gospel. This involves an understanding of life-long education, a return to the centrality of justice in the curriculum we use and the implications of the ecological movement begun in the 20th century in our relationship to God and creation. The aims of religious education are explored through the lenses of curriculum, gender, spirituality and jubilee as well as being open to the voices of other faith traditions.
- Working from the foundation of many developmental theories such as the work of Piaget and Fowler, Jerome Berryman in **Godly Play** (New York: Harper Collins, 1991) explains his theology of childhood and how religious education can assist children in more fully developing their relationship to God. He believes that children have the capability to think in religious language on a deep level and religious educators should use the whole learning environment to support the creative process of imagination and wonder that comes so naturally to them. "Play" is not play in the traditional sense - it is a life-giving work in which one engages in the Story in a respectful and carefully organized way using story, ritual, silence, wonder, time and space. Communication, laughter and playfulness are necessary for children to explore existential issues. Godly Play is a way to know God.